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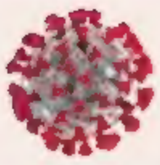


INDIAN COVID VARIANT FOUND IN AT LEAST 17 COUNTRIES: W.H.O.

The UN healthy agency said on Tuesday that the variant contributing to a surge in coronavirus cases in India has been found in over a dozen countries

STRAIN DETECTED IN U.K., U.S. & SINGAPORE

The World Health Organization said the B.1.617 variant of Covid-19, first found in India, had as of Tuesday been detected in over 1,200 sequences uploaded to the GISAID open-access database "from at least 17 countries". "Most sequences were uploaded from India, UK, US and Singapore," the WHO said in its weekly epidemiological update on the pandemic

SPREADS FASTER THAN OTHER VARIANTS

- The WHO said its preliminary modelling based on sequences submitted to GISAID indicates that B.1.617 has a higher growth rate than other circulating variants in India
- "Studies have highlighted that the spread of the second wave has been much faster than the first," the WHO added

B.1.617

VARIANT HAS 13 GENETIC MUTATIONS THAT RESULT IN CHANGES TO THE VIRUS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VIJAYAPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

BENGALURU COVID-19 HELPLINE 1912

BBMP ZONAL 24/7 HELPLINE NUMBERS				
	East Zone	080-25355100	Bommanahalli Zone	8884666670
	West Zone	080-68248454	Yelahanka Zone	9480685964
	South Zone	8431816718	R.R. Nagar Zone	080-28601050
	Mahadevpura Zone	080-23010101/23010102	Dasarahalli Zone	080-29590057/29635904/5906

UPDATE
PHASE 3 OF COVID-19 VACCINATION

- Government of Karnataka has placed orders for 1 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccinations
- Implementation of vaccination will start when supplies are received
- Vaccination of beneficiaries 45 years of age and above to continue as per GOI guidelines
- Exact slots for Vaccination will be made known on the CoWIN portal

Shri B. S. Yediyurappa
Hon'ble Chief Minister

For information : Covid related queries, Covid Testing Centers, Covid Vaccination Centers, Medical Advice on Covid Symptoms call APTHAMITHRA Helpline 14410

For emergency cases, Ambulance facility and Inter -Hospital shifting of COVID-19 patients, call Helpline 108

If you are above 18 years, get yourself vaccinated voluntarily.

To register for the COVID-19 vaccination, visit www.cowin.gov.in

karnataka information
Department of Information and Public Relations

KARNATAKA SECOND WAVE BATTLE

22.70% Positivity Rate | 0.58% Case Fatality Rate | 1,71,997 Samples tested

92,40,078 Total Vaccinations achieved so far

TOP THREE DISTRICTS WITH MOST CASES ON WEDNESDAY

BENGALURU URBAN 22,596 | MYSURU 1,759 | KOLAR 1,194 | TOTAL DEATHS 15,036

39K New Covid cases put K'taka in No. 2 spot

IFFATH FATHIMA @ Bengaluru

IN the most explosive increase that Karnataka has witnessed throughout the pandemic, a whopping 39,047 fresh cases were added to the state's Covid-19 tally on Wednesday. This massive addition has pushed the state to No. 2 position behind Maharashtra, which leads the pack with 6,73,481 active cases, and overtaking Uttar Pradesh.

Karnataka now has 3,28,884 active cases, compared to Uttar Pradesh's 3,00,041, with the latter recording 35,903 recoveries, compared to Karnataka's 11,833, its highest number of discharges in a day.

The state also recorded its highest number of deaths reported in a single day at 229, taking the Covid-19 death toll over the 15,000-mark with 15,036 fatalities. But its mortality rate has come down to 1.04% from 1.05 per cent on Tuesday. The second highest number of deaths reported in a day was 208 on April 2, and the third highest was 201 on April 26.

Karnataka recorded three big jumps of over 30,000 additions of fresh cases to its Covid-19 tally in the last four days.

Police check motorists for violations during the Corona Curfew, near Trinity Circle on MG Road in Bengaluru on Wednesday | VINOO KUMAR T

Besides the highest recorded on Wednesday, the state reported 34,804 fresh cases on April 25 and 31,830 cases on Tuesday. The state's tally now stands at 14,39,822, up from 14,00,775 on Tuesday. The number of persons testing positive per hundred tests (positivity rate) in Karnataka has risen to 5.70 per cent after falling to 4.43 per cent on April 4. It was 5.58 per cent on Tuesday.

Although the 11,883 single-day discharges recorded on Wednesday is the highest in the second wave, the first wave of the pandemic had seen better figures with 13,550 discharged on October 22 and 12,030 discharged on October 12 last year. The total number of patients discharged from March 2020, when the pandemic broke out in Karnataka, until now, stands at 10,95,883, up from 10,84,050 on Tuesday. P6

STATEWIDE	APRIL 27	APRIL 28
Fresh cases	31,830	39,047
Recoveries	10,793	11,833
Deaths	180	229

Mass registrations crash CoWIN

Many complained they did not get OTPs to complete the process on national portal; Centre describes it as a minor glitch, claims 80 lakh people enrolled themselves within three hours

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE CoWIN portal, which facilitates registration and scheduling for Covid vaccine, crashed on Wednesday soon after it opened for those in the 18-44 age group at 4 pm. Complaints of non-receipt of one-time password (OTP) to proceed with the process poured in. Many irate users took to social media to flag the technical problems they faced while trying to register for the third phase of the inoculation drive kicking off from Saturday.

They also complained they could not schedule their vaccination as no slots were available for the next few weeks in their area. To this, the Centre responded saying appointments can be booked only after states and private hospitals fix their vaccination schedule.

The Health Ministry rejected reports of the portal crashing as baseless, and claimed that 80 lakh registrations were done within three hours of opening up. "We close the day with 1.33 crore registrations on Co-Win and delivered 2.78 crore SMSes," tweeted R S Sharma, CEO, National Health Authority.

"CoWIN Portal is working. There was a minor glitch at 4 pm that was fixed. 18 plus can register," read a tweet from Aarogya Setu, the Union Government's app for Covid contact tracing. The app also has a link to the CoWIN portal through which one can register and schedule vaccination.

While all adults will be eligible for Covid-19 vaccine from May 1, people in the 18-44 age group can take the shot only at centres run by state governments or private hospitals. Registration and online appointment is mandatory for this age group as walk-in shots are restricted to those above 45.

Meanwhile, Serum Institute's entire 6-7 crore/month Covishield production could be available in India as there is no clarity on export. But it is not clear how many jabs will go to the Centre, how many to states.

COVISHIELD COST FOR STATES CUT TO ₹300

- Amid outrage on price gouging, Serum Institute of India trimmed the cost of Covishield for state govts from ₹400 to ₹300 per dose
- CEO Adar Poonawalla called it a philanthropic gesture
- Meanwhile, the govt announced 'Y' category security cover to him across the country citing potential threats to him

1st batch of Sputnik V will reach India on Saturday

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

THE first batch of Covid vaccine from Russia, Sputnik V, is set to arrive in India on May 1. "According to Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), the first batch of Sputnik V will be delivered to India on May 1, 2021," said the Russian embassy in response to a query by this newspaper. It, however, did not specify how many doses will be sent to India.

There are only three vaccines with over 90% efficacy against SARS-CoV-2 infection and Sputnik V is one of them. The other two are vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna.

Sputnik was developed by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology with funding from RDIF. The two-dose vaccine has to be administered 21 days apart and costs around $10 (₹750) per dose in the international market. Sources said RDIF is in talks with India authorities on the pricing in the country.

NATIONWIDE	APRIL 27	APRIL 28
Fresh cases	3,23,144	3,60,960
Recoveries	2,51,827	2,61,162
Deaths	2,771	3,293

The Centre has hinted that all foreign vaccines, including Sputnik, will be available only in private hospitals.

Though no official response could be elicited from Dr Reddy's on the development, its management has earlier said that the initial quantity of Sputnik V that will be supplied in India is set to be limited as they will be imported from Russia.

RDIF's manufacturing partners in India – at least four other companies apart from Dr Reddy's – will start producing the vaccines locally by July this year, after which the supplies are likely to be scaled up. The news on Sputnik V comes amid concerns that vaccination has not picked up the required pace to arrest the spread of the infectious disease.

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

April 27: 24,55,869 doses
April 28: 20,49,754 doses

TOTAL DOSES: 14,98,77,121

DELHI HC FAULTS ADVISORY ON REMDESIVIR

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday objected to a change by the Centre in the Covid treatment protocol related to Remdesivir use amid a shortage of the drug, saying "it appears you want people to die".

SECOND DOSE GAP

The gap between the first and the second doses of Covaxin has just been officially increased from four weeks, perhaps due to the shortage. It can now be taken between four and six weeks

1 lakh portable oxygen concentrators will be procured, 500 more PSA oxygen plants sanctioned from PM-CARES. This will improve access to oxygen, specially in district HQs and Tier-2 cities.

FAUCI ON COVAXIN

Covaxin has been found to neutralise the B.1.617 variant, which is the Indian double mutant strain, White House Chief Medical Adviser Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday

OUR IPL SPACE

Kanjikuzhi panchayat (Alappuzha) is undertaking a novel initiative to protect pets and livestock of Covid-infected families — a day care centre for cows, goats, dogs and other animals | P15

20% OF INDIA'S COVID-19 DEATHS IN APRIL ALONE

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

CLOSE to 20% of all official deaths reported in India due to Covid-19, occurred over the last four weeks. Within the same time span, fresh Covid cases shot up a gargantuan 58,47,932. It works out to over 32% of the 1.80 crore reported in the country thus far.

The official tally of 38,719 Covid deaths in April so far — out of 2,01,187 total fatalities due to the contagious disease in the country — may, however, be because of gross undercounting as is evident from the civic death records and grisly visuals from overwhelmed crematoriums across cities and towns.

Experts concur. They point out that while an average of 28,000 deaths are reported in India every day, crematoriums in cities would not be overflowing if the Covid fatality is just 2,000-3,000 a day, as is being counted officially as of now.

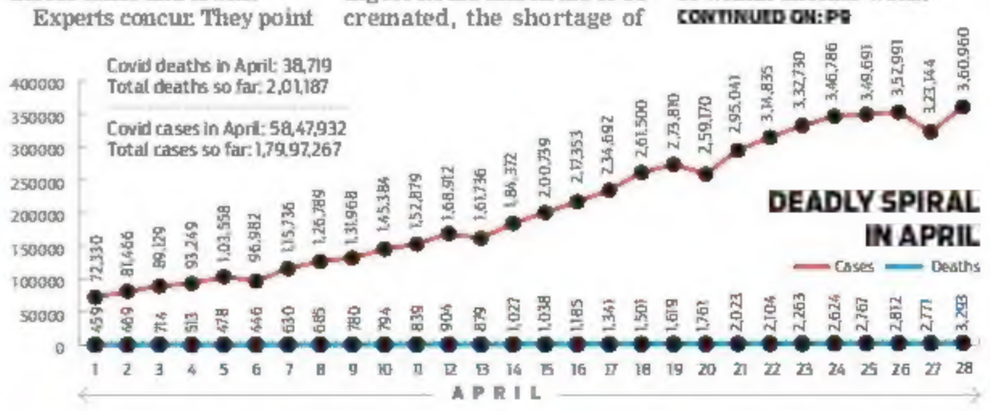
Epidemiologist Jammi N Rao pointed out that the official toll on April 25 was about 2,850. "So assuming all other deaths were constant, the net addition due to Covid amounted to an extra 10% of the baseline," he said.

"Would that excess have resulted in the scale and magnitude of the chaotic scenes we witnessed with cremation grounds working round the clock, queues of bodies waiting for hours and hours to be cremated, the shortage of firewood and so on? I think that is hardly likely."

Public health researcher Oommen John, too, said that the number of reported deaths does not reflect the actual number of people who are in prolonged hypoxia (acute breathlessness), which is incompatible to survival. "This is a mystery and would warrant close attention."

What is alarming is the rapid increase in cases despite local restrictions. India, for instance, was reporting less than 75,000 daily cases in the beginning of the month but reached the 1 lakh mark, higher than the peak in September last within a week, which rose to over 2 lakh cases within another week.

CONTINUED ON: P9



ORPN WANTS SCALP

Minister tells farmer seeking grains to 'die'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru, Belagavi

In an act of grave insensitivity during these distressing times, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Umesh Katti taunted a farmer, who dialed him over the free grains scheme, to "die". The phone conversation between the farmer from Gadad and the clearly contemptuous and arrogant Katti, went viral on Wednesday, landing the minister in soup.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had to publicly chastise Katti for his comments and even expressed regret on the latter's behalf. Infuriated with Katti's treatment of the farmer, Opposition leaders, including KPCC president D K Shivakumar and JDS legislature party chief H D Kumaraswamy, have demanded his immediate ouster from the cabinet.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Tejas tech to aid hosps generate O_2 on site

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

HOSPITALS may soon no longer have to wait for medical oxygen to be transported from long distances. Technology developed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) will help them generate oxygen on site, to be given to needy patients.

The Medical Oxygen Plant (MOP) technology, developed by DRDO for on-board oxygen generation in the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas by DRDO's Bengaluru-based Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL), will now be employed in the fight against the current crisis of oxygen for Covid-19 patients. The same technology generates oxygen for fighter pilots flying the Tejas at high altitudes. The oxygen plant is designed for a capacity of 1,000 litres per minute (LPM). It can cater to 190 patients at a flow rate of 5 LPM and refill 195 cylinders per day.

The Medical Oxygen Plant technology, developed by DRDO | EXPRESS

The technology has already been transferred to Bengaluru-based Tata Advanced Systems Ltd and Coimbatore-based Trident Pneumatics Pvt. Ltd, which will be producing a total of 380 plants of 1,000 LPM capacity for installation across various hospitals in India. Another 120 oxygen plants of 500 LPM capacity will be produced by industries working with Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun, coming under the CSIR, according to a Ministry of Defence release.

CONTINUED ON: P7